

DETAILED ACTION

This action is in response to amendments/arguments filed 5/26/2008. Currently, claims 1-5 and 7-26 are pending in the instant application.

Response to Arguments

Applicant's arguments with respect to claims 1-5 and 7-26 have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

The factual inquiries set forth in *Graham v. John Deere Co.*, 383 U.S. 1, 148 USPQ 459 (1966), that are applied for establishing a background for determining obviousness under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) are summarized as follows:

1. Determining the scope and contents of the prior art.
2. Ascertaining the differences between the prior art and the claims at issue.
3. Resolving the level of ordinary skill in the pertinent art.
4. Considering objective evidence present in the application indicating obviousness or nonobviousness.

Claims 1, 3, 4, 7-8, 12-17, and 19-26 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Eingorn (U.S. Patent 4,667,660) in view of Schroer (US Patent 6,638,295).

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Eingorn discloses a link system (10) comprising a plurality of links (fig. 1), a first constraint (25) coupled to a first link (20) adapted to engage the left side of the head, a second constraint (25) coupled to a second link (24) adapted to engage the right side of the head, wherein the link system is configured to exert force on the head (col. 5, lines 55-63) through the first and second links (20, 24); is capable of being adapted to the geometry of the head such that it remains fixed over a period of time. The constraints (25) are pins (112) including pin heads (186). The first and second links (20, 24) are configured to support a plurality of constraints (110). The through holes (110) allow for a plurality of constraints to be coupled with the first and second links (20, 24). The third link (18) is coupled to the first link (20) at a first joint (126), wherein the first link (20) has one degree of freedom relative to the third link (18). The second link (24) is coupled to the fourth link (22) at a second joint (mirror image of 126), wherein the second link (24) has one degree of freedom relative to the fourth link (22). The fourth link (22) is coupled to the third link (18) at a third joint (128), wherein the third link (18) has one degree of freedom relative to the fourth link (22). The system (10) also comprises force applicators (190) configured to apply force to the constraints (25) to hold them against the head of the user. Eingorn fails to disclose a plurality of first and second constraints. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to add additional constraints to the first and second links, since it has been held that mere duplication of the essential working parts of a device involves only routine skill in the art. *St. Regis Paper Co. v. Bemis Co.*, 193 USPQ 8. Moreover, the links (18, 20, 22, 24) are configured with through holes (110) that more constraints (25) can be coupled through. The link system (10) can be attached to other cervical traction apparatus, such as vest (col. 8, lines 30-32), which are well known in the art to be torso restraints.

Eingorn fails to disclose a compliant member comprising a compliant link configured to simultaneously adjust the force applied to the constraints. However, Schroer teaches a pressure application device (20) comprising arms (30) and hinge (39), wherein the hinge includes a spring (25) causing the arms (31) to apply a continuous force to the patient's head. Therefore, it would be obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to substitute the main support member (12) with the arms and hinge, as taught by Schroer, in order to allow easier adjustment of the device for different size heads. The arms and hinge would function as a compliant link, by Applicant definition, because they apply constant pressure, but can be expanded or compressed with the geometry of the user's head by simultaneously adjusting the spans of the links. The Eingorn/Schroer compliant link alters the orientation of the first link, the second link, the third link, and the fourth link by expanding and contracting.

With respect to claims 20-22, Eingorn/Schroer teaches the elements of the claimed invention; therefore the method steps would be obvious because they would have resulted from the use of the Eingorn/Schroer device. With respect to claim 20, the period of time of at least eight weeks provides no advantage, is not used for a particular purpose, and does not solve a stated problem. The Eingorn/Schroer device would function equally as well over a period of time of at least eight weeks. Therefore, it is a mere design choice and would be obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to modify the Eingorn/Schroer device to be used over a period of time of at least eight weeks.

Claim 18 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Eingorn (U.S. Patent 4,667,660) and Schroer (US Patent 6,638,295), further in view of Guigui et al. (U.S. Patent 5,674,186). Eingorn/Schroer substantially discloses the claimed invention; see claim 17

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rejection above. Eingorn/Schroer fails to disclose a third link that extends from the left half of the head to the right half of the head. However, Guigui teaches a link system (fig. 1) comprising links (1) that extend from the left side of the head to the right side. It would be obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to extend the third and fourth links of Eingorn/Schroer to meet in the rear of the head, as taught by Guigui, in order to provide more stability in the device and insure the constraint are at the same height on either side of the head.

Conclusion

The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure. Roberts et al. (US Patent 3,478,736), Liu (US Patent 4,920,466).

Applicant's amendment necessitated the new ground(s) of rejection presented in this Office action. Accordingly, **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL**. See MPEP § 706.07(a). Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to BRANDON JACKSON whose telephone number is (571)272-3414. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday - Friday 8-5:30.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Patricia Bianco can be reached on (571)272-4940. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/Brandon Jackson/
Examiner, Art Unit 3772